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DANCING, CLAPPING, MEDITATING: JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH IN PSEUDO-IGNATIUS

Shaye J.D. Cohen

Patristic references to Christian observance of the Sabbath have been collected and studied many times, usually in order to demonstrate Christian “judaizing,”¹ but no one has yet attempted, as far as I know, to use patristic literature as evidence for the Jewish observance of the Sabbath. In this paper I study a rich but elusive passage of pseudo-Ignatius which contrasts the Jewish observance of the Sabbath with the Christian. The goal of the paper is to determine whether the Jewish observance of the Sabbath known to pseudo-Ignatius conforms to the ritual prescriptions of the Mishnah and the Talmud. Are these Jews observing the Sabbath rabbinically? In order to explicate the passage and answer this question, I shall discuss Christian observance of the Sabbath as well.²

Ignatius of Antioch, who lived in the early decades of the second century CE, is the author of seven letters written while on route from Syria through Asia Minor to Rome, there to be martyred. Six of the seven letters are addressed to specific churches of Asia Minor, while the seventh is addressed to the bishop Polycarp. These letters are included in all modern editions of “The Apostolic Fathers.” In the second half of the fourth century an anonymous person in Syria rewrote these seven genuine letters of Ignatius, interpolating and altering the text at will, besides composing six additional letters. This corpus of thirteen letters, comprising seven interpolated letters and six spurious letters, is known as the “long recension” of Ignatius or pseudo-Ignatius, and is

All translations are mine unless otherwise credited. For the dating and attribution of early Christian texts I follow Siegmund Döpp and Wilhelm Geerlings, ed., *Dictionary of Early Christian Literature* (NY: Crossroad, 2000). AC = Apostolic Constitutions, as edited by F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* (Paderborn, 1905), and Marcel Metzger, *Les constitutions apostoliques* (Paris, 1985-1987; three volumes; Sources chrétiennes 320, 329, 336). CCSL = Corpus Christianorum Series Latina. CSEL = Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. PG = Patrologia Graeca. PL = Patrologia Latina. For pseudo-Ignatius (the long recension) I have used the edition of J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, part 2: *Ignatius, Polycarp*, vol. 3 (London, 1889; repr. Peabody, 1989). (NB: vol. 3 contains the long recension or pseudo-Ignatius; vol. 2 contains the real Ignatius.) Greek excerpts are transcribed from the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG), and rabbinic from the Bar Ilan Database.

¹ E.g. Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel* (London, 1996) chapter 11 (“The Judaizers within the Church”); Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, 1993) 375-377.

² This paper is a successor to my “Sabbath Law and Mishnah Shabbat in Origen De Principiis,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 17 (2010) 160-189. I have found little previous scholarship on this passage of pseudo-Ignatius; Lightfoot ad loc. (vol. 3, pp. 173-174) assembles a wealth of relevant patristic passages; Daniel Sperber, “Dancing on the Sabbath,” *Sinai* 57 (5725/1965) 122-126 (Hebrew), confuses pseudo-Ignatius with real Ignatius but has the merit of citing Mishnah and Bavli Beitzah (see below); Feldman, *Jew and Gentile* 375 (who also confuses pseudo-Ignatius with real Ignatius); Heather McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue* (Leiden, 1994) 181-183.

an important document of Christianity in Syria in the mid or late fourth century.³ The identity of pseudo-Ignatius is unknown, but many scholars have suggested that he⁴ is identical with, or at least a close associate of, the compiler of the Apostolic Constitutions. Like pseudo-Ignatius, the Apostolic Constitutions is pseudographic. It claims to be the work of the apostolic council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), transcribed by Clement of Rome, but was actually written in Syria in the late fourth century CE. Like pseudo-Ignatius, the author of AC freely rewrites his sources. The passage of pseudo-Ignatius that is at the heart of this paper has several important connections with the Apostolic Constitutions, as we shall see below.⁵

Ignatius and pseudo-Ignatius on the Sabbath

Before turning to the passage from pseudo-Ignatius, let us look first at its source, the parallel passage in real Ignatius. Here is Ignatius' letter to the Magnesians c. 9:

Εἰ οὖν οἱ ἐν παλαιοῖς πράγμασιν ἀναστραφέντες εἰς καινότητα ἐλπίδος ἦλθον, μηκέτι σαββατίζοντες, ἀλλὰ κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες, ἐν ᾗ καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἡμῶν ἀνέτειλεν δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ θανάτου ὃ τινες ἀρνοῦνται, δι' οὗ μυστηρίου ἐλάβομεν τὸ πιστεῦν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ὑπομένομεν, ἵνα εὐρεθῶμεν μαθηταὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ μόνου διδασκάλου ἡμῶν· πῶς ἡμεῖς δυνησόμεθα ζῆσαι χωρὶς αὐτοῦ, οὗ καὶ οἱ προφῆται μαθηταὶ ὄντες τῷ πνεύματι ὡς διδασκαλὸν αὐτὸν προσεδόκων; Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο, ὃν δικαίως ἀνέμενον, παρὼν ἤγειρεν αὐτοὺς ἐκ νεκρῶν.

If, then, those who lived in old ways came to newness of hope, no longer keeping Sabbath, but living in accordance with the Lord's day, on which also our life arose through him and his death (which some deny), through which mystery we received faith, and therefore we endure that we may be found disciples of Christ, our only teacher; how shall we able to live without him, of whom the prophets were also disciples in the spirit, him to whom they looked forward as their teacher? And therefore he for whom they rightly waited came and raised them.⁶

³ On pseudo-Ignatius see Lightfoot, *Ignatius* 1.233-279; Jack Hannah, "The Setting of the Ignatian Long Recension," *JBL* 79 (1960) 221-238; James D. Smith III, *The Ignatian Long Recension and Christian Communities in Fourth Century Syrian Antioch* (ThD thesis, Harvard Divinity School, 1985); Döpp and Geerlings, *Dictionary* 296-297 s.v. Ignatius; and my "Judaism without Circumcision and 'Judaism' without 'Circumcision' in Ignatius," *Harvard Theological Review* 95 (2002) 395-415, esp. 399-401 = Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Significance of Yavneh and other Essays in Jewish Hellenism* (Tübingen, 2010) 457-59.

⁴ I assume it was a he.

⁵ Döpp and Geerlings, *Dictionary* s.v. *Apostolic Constitutions*. AC and pseudo-Ignatius also have strong links with an Arian commentary on Job attributed to one Julian, but as far as I can see that work has no bearing on the subject of this essay. See Dieter Hagedorn, *Der Hiobkommentar des arianers Julian* (Berlin/New York, 1973) xxxvii-lviii; Metzger, *Les constitutions apostoliques* 1.52-54.

⁶ Translation from William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1985) 123.

This passage is an important witness to the emergence of the Lord's day (Sunday) as the Christian replacement for the Sabbath (Saturday), but I cannot discuss this passage here. Here is pseudo-Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* 9:⁷

(1.) Εἰ οὖν οἱ ἐν παλαιοῖς γράμμασιν ἀναστραφέντες εἰς καινότητα ἐλπίδος ἦλθον ἐκδεχόμενοι Χριστόν, ὡς ὁ κύριος διδάσκει λέγων· *Εἰ ἐπιστεύετε Μωσεῖ, ἐπιστεύσατε ἂν ἐμοί· περὶ γὰρ ἐμοῦ ἐκεῖνος ἔγραψεν· καὶ Ἀβραὰμ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ἠγαλλιάσατο, ἵνα ἴδῃ τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἐμήν, καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἐχάρη· πρὶν γὰρ Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμι.* (2.) πῶς ἡμεῖς δυνησόμεθα ζῆσαι χωρὶς αὐτοῦ, οὗ καὶ οἱ προφῆται ὄντες δοῦλοι τῷ πνεύματι προεώρων αὐτόν καὶ ὡς διδάσκαλον ἀνέμενον καὶ προσεδόκων ὡς κύριον καὶ σωτῆρα λέγοντες· *Αὐτὸς ἥξει καὶ σώσει ἡμᾶς;* (3.) μηκέτι οὖν σαββατίζωμεν ἰουδαϊκῶς καὶ ἀργίαις χαίροντες· *Ὁ μὴ ἐργαζόμενος γὰρ μὴ ἐσθιέτω·* καὶ πάλιν· *Ἐν ἰδρώτι γὰρ τοῦ προσώπου σου φάγη τὸν ἄρτον σου,* φασὶ τὰ λόγια. ἀλλ' ἕκαστος ὑμῶν σαββατίζετω πνευματικῶς, μελέτη νόμων χαίρων, οὐ σώματος ἀνέσει, δημιουργίαν θεοῦ θαυμάζων, οὐχ ἔωλα ἐσθίων καὶ χλιαρὰ πίνων καὶ μεμετρημένα βαδίζων καὶ ὀρχήσῃ καὶ κρότοις νοῦν οὐκ ἔχουσι χαίρων· (4.) καὶ μετὰ τὸ σαββατίσαι ἐορταζέτω πᾶς φιλόχριστος τὴν κυριακὴν, τὴν ἀναστάσιμον, τὴν βασιλίδαν, τὴν ὑπατον πασῶν τῶν ἡμερῶν, ἣν περιμένων ὁ προφήτης ἔλεγεν· *Εἰς τὸ τέλος, ὑπὲρ τῆς ὀγδόης ἐν ἣ καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἡμῶν ἀνέτειλεν, καὶ τοῦ θανάτου γέγονε νίκη ἐν Χριστῷ.* (5.) ὃν τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀπωλείας ἀρνοῦνται, οἱ ἐχθροὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία, οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες, οἱ φιλήδονοι καὶ οὐ φιλόθεοι, μὀρφωσιν εὐσεβείας ἔχοντες, τὴν δὲ δύναμιν αὐτῆς ἡρνημένοι, οἱ χριστέμποροι, τὸν λόγον καπηλεύοντες καὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν πωλοῦντες, οἱ τῶν γυναικῶν φθορεῖς καὶ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἐπιθυμηταί, οἱ χρηματολαίλαπες· ὧν ῥυσθείητε ἐλέει θεοῦ διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

(1) If, therefore, those who lived according to the ancient scriptures came to the newness of hope by receiving Christ, as the Lord teaches, saying, *If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me* (John 5:46), and *Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; and he saw it and was glad ... Before Abraham was I am* (John 8:56, 58) – (2) how shall we be able to live without him, whose servants, the prophets, foresaw him in the spirit, awaited him as teacher, and looked forward to him as lord and savior, saying, *He shall come and save us* (Isaiah 35:4). (3) Therefore let us no longer observe the Sabbath Jewishly and rejoice in idleness. For Scripture says *He who does not work, let him not eat* (paraphrase of 2 Thessalonians 3:10), and *In the sweat of your brow you shall eat your bread* (Genesis 3:19). But let each of you observe the Sabbath spiritually, by rejoicing in meditation on

⁷ The text of Ignatius and pseudo-Ignatius is transcribed by the TLG from F. Diekamp and F. X. Funk, *Patres apostolici*, vol. 2 (3rd ed. Tübingen, 1913). Scriptural citations are in italics.

laws and not in the release of the body, by marveling at the creative work of God, not by eating day-old foods, drinking lukewarm drinks, walking measured distances, and rejoicing in dancing and senseless clapping. (4) And after observing the Sabbath [in this spiritual manner], let every Christ-lover celebrate the Lord's day, the day of the resurrection, the queen, the chief of all days, awaiting which the prophet said, *Regarding completion; over the eighth* (Psalms 6:1; 11[12]:1), on which our life rose up, and there was victory over death in Christ. (5) Him do *the children of destruction deny* (Isaiah 57:4), *the enemies of the cross, whose God is the belly, who think earthly things* (Philippians 3:18-19), *lovers of pleasure and not lovers of God, holding the form of piety while denying its power* (2 Timothy 3:4-5), *traffickers in Christ, peddlers of the Logos* (2 Corinthians 2:17), the corrupters of women, coveters of what is not theirs, money grubbers – by the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ may you be saved from them.

In his customary manner pseudo-Ignatius has substantially rewritten his source. His main innovation concerns the relationship of Sabbath to Lord's day. In Ignatius the Lord's day replaces the Sabbath, but in pseudo-Ignatius the Lord's day supplements the Sabbath: the observance of the Sabbath prepares a Christian for the observance of the Lord's day. Aside from making this substantive change, pseudo-Ignatius has expanded upon the original. He has added numerous scriptural citations and allusions, especially in paragraph 5. His additions to paragraphs 3 and 4 about Sabbath and Lord's day are the subject of this essay.

According to pseudo-Ignatius Christians are to observe the Sabbath (the verb is *sabbatize*, from real Ignatius), but they are to do so spiritually ("pneumatically"), not in the Jewish manner ("Jewishly"). The observance of the Sabbath "Jewishly" consists of the following:

- Rejoicing in idleness; rejoicing in the release of the body
- Eating day-old foods, drinking lukewarm drinks
- Walking measured distances
- Rejoicing in dancing and clapping

In contrast the Christian or spiritual observance of the Sabbath consists of the following:

- Rejoicing in meditation on laws
- Marveling at the creative work of God

After observing the Sabbath spiritually, the Christian is prepared to "celebrate the Lord's day, the day of the resurrection, the queen, the chief of all days."

Pseudo-Ignatius, like the original Ignatius, is a Christian author writing for a Christian audience. In the first instance, then, we should assume that the author is addressing Christians; that is, the people whom pseudo-Ignatius is trying to discourage from observing the Sabbath "Jewishly" are Christians. Nonetheless, we may also assume that when pseudo-Ignatius accuses these Christians of observing the Sabbath

“Jewishly,” he believes that their behavior is not only the kind of thing that Jews might do, it is also the kind of thing that Jews actually do.

Pseudo-Ignatius’ big point is the contrast between the carnal Jew and the spiritual Christian, a topos in Christian literature beginning with Paul. Thus while classical writers faulted the Jews for being idle on the Sabbath, Christian writers faulted the Jews not only for idleness but also for privileging the physical over the spiritual.⁸ According to pseudo-Ignatius both Jews and Christians “rejoice” on the Sabbath, but Jews rejoice carnally by eating, drinking, dancing, and clapping, while Christians rejoice spiritually by meditating on laws. Pseudo-Ignatius does not explicitly state that the Jews are feasting – indeed, eating day-old foods and imbibing lukewarm drinks might appear to be the opposite of feasting – but of the five specific acts that he mentions (eating, drinking, walking limited distances,⁹ dancing, clapping) two involve food and two involve entertainment. This is carnality. Other Christian writers too claim that the Jews observe the Sabbath by feasting.¹⁰

The carnal (food) and the spiritual (Torah) on the Sabbath

Among the Christian writers who decry Jewish luxury and excess on the Sabbath is John Chrysostom (ca. 349- 407):¹¹

Οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι νομίζουσιν, ὅτι δι’ ἀργίαν αὐτοῖς τὸ σάββατον δέδοται. Οὐκ ἔστι δὲ αὕτη ἡ αἰτία, ἀλλ’ ἵνα τῶν βιωτικῶν ἑαυτοὺς ἀπαγαγόντες, τὴν σχολὴν ἅπασαν εἰς τὰ πνευματικὰ ἀναλίσκωσιν... Ἐπεὶ οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι τῶν βιωτικῶν ἀπαλλαγέντες πραγμάτων, τοῖς πνευματικοῖς οὐ προσεῖχον, σωφροσύνη καὶ ἐπιεικεία καὶ ἀκροάσει θείων λογίων, ἀλλὰ τούναντίον ἐποίουν, γαστριζόμενοι, μεθύοντες, διαρρήγνυμενοι, τρυφῶντες, διὰ τοῦτο κατηγόρησεν αὐτῶν ὁ

⁸ Classical writers on the Sabbath: Feldman, *Jew and Gentile* 158-167; Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia* (Cambridge, 1997) 82-92; Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem, 1974-1984; three volumes) 3.146 index s.v. Sabbath. Christian authors on the Sabbath: see H. Dumaine in *Dictionnaire d’archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 4,1 (1921) 918-929; for the “spiritual Sabbath,” see Dumaine 927-929. See e.g. Augustinus, *De consensu evangelistarum* 2.77 (CSEL 43.255) *Judaeorum pessima consuetudo illo die [Sabbato] deliciis afluere, dum spiritale sabbatum ignorant.*

⁹ I do not know why pseudo-Ignatius includes the reference to walking measured distances which confirms Jewish indolence but not carnality. Perhaps pseudo-Ignatius is using a ready made list of Jewish Sabbath observances.

¹⁰ Jerome Commentary on Isaiah 56.2 (CCSL 73A.630) *neque enim prodest sedere in sabbatho, sive dormire aut epulis inhiare.* Cf. too Commentary on Isaiah 53.12 (CCSL 73A.597): *Ex quo qui dispensatoriam inter Petrum et Paulum contentionem uere dicunt iurgium fuisse atque certamen, ut blasphemanti Porphyrio satisfaciant, et ueteris legis caeremonias in Ecclesia Christi a stirpe credentis Israel asserunt esse seruandas, debent et auream in mille annis expectare Hierusalem, ut uictimas immolent et circumcidantur, ut in sabbato sedeant, dormiant, saturentur, inebrientur et surgant ludere, qui ludus offendit Deum.* Cf. too Theodoret PG 82.584 commenting on Philippians 3:19.

¹¹ *De Lazaro* PG 48.972, cited by Lightfoot. Chrysostom is echoed by Theodoret, commentary on Amos 6:3 PG 81.1693. “False Sabbaths” are also treated by Cyril of Alexandria, commentary on Amos 6:3 PG 71.517C-520A; and Eusebius, commentary on Psalm 91 (92) PG 23.1169.

προφήτης. Εἰπὼν γὰρ, *Οὐαὶ οἱ ἐρχόμενοι εἰς ἡμέραν κακὴν*, καὶ ἐπαγαγὼν, *Οἱ ἐφαπτόμενοι σαββάτων ψευδῶν*, ἔδειξε διὰ τῆς ἐπαγωγῆς, πῶς ἦν αὐτοῖς τὰ σάββατα ψευδῆ. Πῶς οὖν αὐτὰ ἐποιοῦν ψευδῆ; Τῷ κακίαν ἐργάζεσθαι, τρυφῶντες, μεθύοντες, καὶ τὰ μυρία αἴσχιστα καὶ χαλεπὰ πράσσοντες. Καὶ ὅτι τοῦτο ἐστὶν ἀληθές, ἄκουσον τῶν ἐξῆς. Δείκνυσι γὰρ ὁ λέγων δι' ὧν εὐθύς ἐπάγει καὶ λέγει· *Οἱ καθεύδοντες ἐπὶ κλινῶν ἐλεφαντίνων, καὶ κατασπαταλῶντες ἐπὶ τῶν στρωμνῶν αὐτῶν, οἱ ἐσθιόντες ἐρίφους ἐκ ποιμνίων, καὶ μοσχάρια ἐκ βουκολίων γαλαθηνά, οἱ πίνοντες τὸν διυλισμένον οἶνον, καὶ τὰ πρῶτα μύρα χριόμενοι*. Ἔλαβες τὸ σάββατον, ἵνα τῆς πονηρίας ἀπαλλάξης τὴν ψυχὴν· σὺ δὲ αὐτὴν κατεργάζῃ πλέον.

The Jews think that the Sabbath was given to them for the sake of idleness. But this is not the reason; rather, (the purpose is that) they should devote all their leisure to spiritual things after having removed themselves from the concerns of daily life... The Jews, having been set free from the concerns of daily life, did not turn their attention to spiritual matters, that is, to sobriety, self-control, and the hearing of the divine words, but they did the opposite, feasting, becoming drunk, bursting (with food)¹², luxuriating. Therefore the prophet accused them. After saying *Woe, those who are coming*¹³ *to an evil day*, and adding *Who hold fast to false sabbaths*, he shows through the continuation how their sabbaths were *false*. How then did they make them false? By doing evil, luxuriating, becoming drunk, and doing ten thousand shameful and intolerable things. And that this is true, listen to what follows. He shows what I am saying through what he adds immediately and says, *who sleep on beds of ivory, and live lewdly on their couches, who eat kids from the flocks and suckling calves from the midst of the herds, who drink thoroughly filtered wine and anoint themselves with the finest oils* (Amos 6:3-6). You have accepted the Sabbath so that you may free the soul from wickedness, but you have instead made it full of wickedness.

Chrysostom is commenting on Amos 6:3ff LXX which runs as follows:¹⁴

(3.) οἱ ἐρχόμενοι [v.l. ἐυχόμενοι] εἰς ἡμέραν κακὴν, οἱ ἐγγιζόντες καὶ ἐφαπτόμενοι σαββάτων ψευδῶν, (4.) οἱ καθεύδοντες ἐπὶ κλινῶν ἐλεφαντίνων καὶ κατασπαταλῶντες ἐπὶ ταῖς στρωμαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἔσθοντες ἐρίφους ἐκ ποιμνίων καὶ μοσχάρια ἐκ μέσου βουκολίων γαλαθηνά, (5.) οἱ ἐπικροτοῦντες πρὸς τὴν φωνὴν τῶν ὀργάνων ὡς ἐστῶτα ἐλογίσαντο καὶ οὐχ ὡς φεύγοντα· (6.) οἱ πίνοντες τὸν διυλισμένον οἶνον καὶ τὰ πρῶτα μύρα χριόμενοι καὶ οὐκ ἔπασχον οὐδὲν ἐπὶ τῇ συντριβῇ Ἰωσηφ. (7.) διὰ τοῦτο νῦν αἰχμάλωτοι ἔσονται.

(3) Those who are coming to an evil day, who draw near and hold fast to false Sabbaths, (4) who sleep on beds of ivory, and live lewdly on their couches,

¹² This is how the Latin translator in PG takes it; perhaps it means “bursting out,” that is, going wild.

¹³ Our LXX reads “who pray for” (*eukhomenoi*) rather than “who are coming to” (*erkhomenoi*).

¹⁴ The translation follows The New English Translation of the Septuagint (available at <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/>).

and eat kids from the flocks, and suckling calves from the midst of the herds, (5) who applaud at the sound of the instruments – since they considered them as permanent and not as fleeting – (6) who drink thoroughly filtered wine and anoint themselves with the finest oils – they were not even suffering anything over the ruin of Joseph. (7) Therefore they shall now be captives ...

Chrysostom understands Amos' reference to *false Sabbaths*¹⁵ to be a kind of heading: the Sabbaths of the Jews (we would probably call them Israelites) are false (Amos 6:3) because, as the following verses explain, the Jews have turned them into festivals of carnal delights (Amos 6:4-6) which include gluttony, drunkenness, luxury, music, and clapping. The Jews should have devoted their Sabbaths to spiritual things, but instead, by "doing evil, luxuriating, becoming drunk, and doing ten thousand shameful and intolerable things," they made their Sabbaths "false" – so Chrysostom understands the preaching of the prophet.

Chrysostom is explicating the book of Amos, and Amos is addressing the Jews (Israelites) of his time. But as is so often true of scriptural exegesis, here too the exegete seems to be standing with one foot in the scriptural past and the other in the post-scriptural present. In particular Chrysostom's use of the term "Jews" elides the distinction between the time of the text and the time of the interpreter; the passage opens in the present tense, "The Jews think that the Sabbath was given to them for the sake of idleness." If we may assume that Chrysostom is talking about Jews in fourth century Syria, or at least his perception of them, his critique of the "false Sabbaths" of the Jews dovetails nicely with the critique of pseudo-Ignatius. True, the biblical passage does not mention dancing, but all the other points in our passage of pseudo-Ignatius are accounted for (eating, drinking, clapping), most particularly the conceptual category of "false Sabbaths." If this is correct, this passage of Chrysostom, which at first appears to confirm the accuracy or reality of pseudo-Ignatius' critique of Jewish practice, actually problematizes it, since this passage suggests that the critique of Jewish practice may be based not on actual observation of contemporary Jews but on Amos' critique of Ephraimite society in the eighth century BCE (as rendered by the LXX).¹⁶ Shall we say that the carnal Jews of pseudo-Ignatius and John Chrysostom exemplify the tendency of church writers to project the sins of biblical Israel on post-biblical Judaism? Shall we conclude that feasting, drinking, clapping, and dancing Jews on the Sabbath in Syria in the second half of the fourth century were a figment of the Christian polemical imagination?

¹⁵ The Hebrew has שבת, which is read *shevet* by MT and *Shabbat* by LXX.

¹⁶ With a contribution perhaps from Hosea 2:11 [2:13]; see [Rufinus] *Commentarius in Oseam* PL 21.976A. *Auferam omne gaudium ejus, solemnitatem ejus, neomeniam ejus, sabbatum ejus, et omnia festa tempora ejus. Posuit nomina feriarum, in quibus plurimum laetabatur, cum tota regio choreis, canticis epulisque lasciviret.*

I believe that the answer is no, that the critique of Jewish society advanced by pseudo-Ignatius and John Chrysostom has a factual basis, and this for two reasons. First, all the specific points of Jewish observance mentioned by pseudo-Ignatius are confirmed by other sources – these are not projections of Christian theology or Christian scriptural exegesis. Second, rabbinic literature confirms the Christian assertion that Jews (some Jews, at least) observed the Sabbath primarily through food and drink. I shall now discuss these two points.

First, all the specific points of Jewish observance mentioned by pseudo-Ignatius are confirmed by other sources. Classical authors know that Jews do not light a fire or use a fire on the Sabbath.¹⁷ Christian authors add the detail that the Jews do not cook on the Sabbath; all food eaten on the Sabbath must be prepared the day before (on Friday, called *paraskeuê*, “preparation”).¹⁸ Hence, pseudo-Ignatius says, on the Sabbath Jews eat day-old food.¹⁹ In his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* (ca. 150-160 CE), Justin, the gentile Christian, admonishes his Jewish interlocutor not to “think it strange that we (gentile Christians) drink hot (drinks) on the Sabbath.”²⁰ As to walking measured distances, any number of ancient texts state that Jews do not embark on a journey on the Sabbath. Christian texts add the detail that Jews will travel only a limited distance, what Acts 1:12 calls “a Sabbath day’s journey.”²¹ Various patristic and rabbinic texts confirm that Jews dance and clap on the Sabbath, as I shall discuss below. So in spite of the fact that other Christian writers use Amos 6:3-6 LXX as a prooftext for Jewish carnality on the Sabbath, that passage does not seem to have determined the polemic of pseudo-Ignatius here. No doubt Jews would have disputed pseudo-Ignatius’ negative judgement of their religiosity, but the basic facts seem accurate enough.

Second, rabbinic texts confirm the place of food and drink in Sabbath observance. The Babylonian Talmud devotes two folio pages of tractate Shabbat to the requirement of “honoring” the Sabbath. And how does one “honor” the Sabbath? Through good food and drink, through elegant clothes and tableware. The Talmud even tells a story of a Jew of Laodicea, presumably the Laodicea of Syria, not far from Antioch, who conspicuously and ostentatiously “honors” the Sabbath with fine foods.²²

¹⁷ See note 8 above and Lutz Doering, *Schabbat: Sabbathalacha und –praxis im Frühjudentum* (Tübingen, 1999) 96 n. 255.

¹⁸ See especially the sixth Paschal letter (418 CE) of Cyril of Alexandria PG 77.521.

¹⁹ ἥλωα in Greek. *Kréas heôlon* translates בֶּשַׁר פֶּגֶל in LXX Ezekiel 4:14. Jerome in Isaiam 65.4 (CCSL 73A.747), cited by Lightfoot, uses *heôlon* to mean “pork stew.” But for pseudo-Ignatius *heôlon* is any day-old food. We may safely assume that Sabbath-observant Jews did not eat pork stew.

²⁰ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 29, also cited by Lightfoot.

²¹ Cohen, “Sabbath Law and Mishnah Shabbat in Origen,” 170-171.

²² B. Shabbat 117b-119b; the story about Laodicea is on 119a (parallel in Genesis Rabbah 11.4 p. 91 ed. Theodor-Albeck). As noted by Theodor ad loc. this Laodicea is probably the city near Syrian Antioch.

Yerushalmi Shabbat preserves a debate on the importance of eating and drinking on the Sabbath (15.3 15a):

רבי חגי בשם רבי שמואל בר נחמן לא ניתנו שבתות וימים טובים אלא לאכילה ולשתייה על ידי שהפה זה מסריח התירו לו לעסוק בהן בדברי תורה רבי ברכיה בשם רבי חייא בר בא לא ניתנו שבתות וימים טובים אלא לעסוק בהן בדברי תורה מתניתא מסייעה בין לדין בין לדין כיצד הוא עושה או יושב ואוכל או יושב ועוסק בדברי תורה כתוב אחד אומר שבת הוא לה' וכתוב אחר אומר עצרת לה' אלהיך הא כיצד תן חלק לתלמוד תורה וחלק לאכול ולשתות אמר רבי אבהו שבת לה' שבות כה' מה הקדוש ברוך הוא שבת ממאמר אף את שבות ממאמר.

R. Haggai said in the name of R. Samuel b. Nahman:

The Sabbaths and the festivals were given only for the sake of eating and drinking; [but] because the mouth stinks they have permitted the study of the words of Torah on them.

R. Berekhia said in the name of R. Hiyya b. Ba:

The Sabbaths and the festivals were given only so that one study words of Torah on them.

A rabbinic teaching supports both this position and that:

How should a person act? He may sit and eat or he may sit and study words of Torah.²³

One scriptural verse says *It is the Sabbath for the Lord* (Leviticus 23:3), and another scriptural verse says *it is a solemn assembly for the Lord your God* (Deuteronomy 16:8). How (do we fulfill the requirement that the Sabbath or festival belong to the Lord?)

Devote a portion (of the day) to the study of Torah, and a portion to eating and drinking.

R. Abbahu said:

A Sabbath for the Lord, rest on the Sabbath like the Lord. Just as the holy one, blessed be he, rested on the Sabbath from speaking [by not creating], so too you rest on the Sabbath from (inappropriate) speaking.

R. Haggai and R. Berekhia, two sages of the land of Israel of the early or mid fourth century CE, in the name of earlier authorities, debate the relative importance of eating and drinking vs. studying Torah on the Sabbath. They are not speaking about communal Torah study, which takes place in synagogue or other public venues. The public reading of the Torah was an ancient custom, known to Philo, Josephus, and the Mishnah, to which no one could have any objection.²⁴ No. R. Haggai and R. Berekhia are speaking about private Torah study. How should one celebrate the Sabbath in

²³ The paragraph can also be punctuated as follows. "How should a person act? Shall he sit and eat or shall he sit and study words of Torah?"

²⁴ Reading the Torah on the Sabbath: see e.g. Philo, *Life of Moses* 215-216, *On the Special Laws* 2.60-62; Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.175-183; Mishnah Megillah 4:1-2.

private – through eating and drinking or through Torah study? R. Haggai says: through eating and drinking. In principle private Torah study is prohibited on the Sabbath because it might detract from public Torah study.²⁵ However, in order to prevent inappropriate speech (“the mouth stinks”) on the Sabbath, or perhaps as an antidote to inappropriate speech, private Torah study was permitted. Better that people should study Torah than engage in idle chatter or slanderous talk.²⁶ In contrast R. Berekhia says that Torah study is the main point of the Sabbath. Both sages, as R. Abbahu observes, opposed inappropriate speech on the Sabbath. Their argument is about the nature of the Sabbath itself. Is it a day of carnal delight (eating and drinking), spiritual delight (Torah study), or, as the Talmud itself suggests, both?²⁷ The critique of Jewish Sabbath observance found in pseudo-Ignatius and other Christian authors suggests that these Christians knew Jews who observed the Sabbath in the manner endorsed by R. Haggai and the Babylonian Talmud: the Sabbath is for eating and drinking.

Rejoicing in dancing and clapping

Pseudo-Ignatius says that the Jews rejoice in dancing and clapping on the Sabbath. Jewish dancing on the Sabbath caught the attention of Augustine (354-430), bishop of Hippo in north Africa, who refers to it in no less than four separate passages.²⁸ Here is what he says:

Observe the Sabbath day – this is commanded to us (Christians) even more (than to the Jews), because we are commanded to observe it spiritually. The Jews

²⁵ M. Shabbat 16:1 with the discussion in Vered Noam and Elisha Qimron, “A Qumran composition of Sabbath laws and its contribution to the study of early Halakha,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 16 (2009) 55-96.

²⁶ I follow Lieberman’s interpretation: studying Torah (which is done with the mouth, verbalizing the text) is an antidote to inappropriate speech (slander, idle chatter, and the like). See Saul Lieberman, *HaYerushalmi Kipshuto*, edited and supplemented by Menahem Katz (Jerusalem, 2008) 554 (supplement to 190) [Hebrew]. The prohibition of inappropriate speech (or of too much speech – see the continuation in the Yerushalmi) derives ultimately from Isaiah 58:13, even if this Talmudic passage uses a noun from the root אָמַר (in order to echo Genesis 1) rather than דָּבַר. On the prohibition of inappropriate speech on the Sabbath see Menahem Kister, “The Prayers of the Seventh Book of the *Apostolic Constitutions* and their Implications for the Formulation of the Synagogue Prayers,” *Tarbiz* 77 (2008) 205-238 [Hebrew], at 213 n. 38, apropos of AC 7.36.5 (cited below); Doering, *Schabbat* 83-87. A Christian version of this tradition appears in the Didascalia 21 (= AC 5.10), “For this reason it is required that all Christians should keep themselves from idle speech and from words of frivolity and impurity. Even on a Sunday, which is a day of rejoicing and pleasure for us, nobody is permitted to speak a word of frivolity, alien to the fear of God.” See Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Didascalia Apostolorum: an English Version* (Turnhout, 2009) 211-212.

²⁷ On this debate in rabbinic texts (Sabbath as a day of carnal delight vs. spiritual delight) see Kister, “Prayers,” 214 n. 40 (citing the work of Alon and Gilat), and Reuven Kimelman, “The Rabbinic Theology of the Physical,” in *Cambridge History of Judaism IV: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven Katz (Cambridge, 2006) 946-976, at 949-951.

²⁸ Most of the following patristic passages were cited by Lightfoot.

observe the Sabbath day in a servile manner, for luxury, for drunkenness. How much better would it be if their women would make wool on that day rather than dance on their balconies! Far be it from us, brothers, that we should say that they observe the Sabbath. The Christian observes the Sabbath spiritually, keeping himself from servile work. And what does “servile work” mean? Sin.²⁹

Observe the Sabbath day – not carnally, not with the delicacies of the Jews, who misuse their leisure for wickedness. It would be better if they were to dig the whole day rather than to dance the whole day.³⁰

The title of the Psalm (92) is *A Psalm of song for the Sabbath day*. Behold, today is the Sabbath day; at the present moment the Jews are celebrating it in the body, with a kind of languid, dissolute, and luxurious leisure. They are at rest for worthless things; although God commanded the Sabbath, they observe the Sabbath by doing those things which God prohibits. Our rest is from evil works, their rest is from good works. Better that they should plow rather than dance. They are at rest from good work; from worthless work they are not at rest. God has proclaimed the Sabbath to us. What sort of Sabbath? First, see where it is. Our Sabbath is inside, in the heart.³¹

It is said to you that you should observe the Sabbath spiritually, not as the Jews observe the Sabbath, with carnal leisure. They wish to rest for their worthless things and their luxuries. Better that a Jew do some useful work in his field rather than sit in the theater, full of rebellion (against God). And better that their women make wool on the Sabbath day rather than dance immodestly on their balconies.³²

²⁹ In Iohannis Evangelium tractatus 3.19 (CCSL 36.29): *Observa diem sabbati, magis nobis praecipitur: quia spiritualiter observandum praecipitur. Iudaei enim serviliter observant diem sabbati, ad luxuriam, ad ebrietatem. Quanto melius feminae eorum lanam facerent quam illo die in maenianis saltarent? Absit, fratres, ut illos dicamus observare sabbatum. Spiritualiter observat sabbatum christianus, abstinens se ab opere servili. Quid est enim ab opere servili? A peccato.*

³⁰ Enarratio in Psalmos 32 (CCSL 38.251-252): *Observa diem Sabbati, non carnaliter, non iudaicis deliciis, qui otio abutuntur ad nequitiam. Melius enim utique tota die foderent quam tota die saltarent.*

³¹ Enarratio in Psalmos 91 (CCSL 39.1280): *Titulus psalmi habet: Psalmus cantici in diem sabbati. Ecce et hodiernus dies sabbati est: hunc in praesenti tempore otio quodam corporaliter languido et fluxo et luxurioso celebrant Iudaei. Vacant enim ad nugas; et cum Deus praeceperit sabbatum, illi in his quae Deus prohibet exercent Sabbatum. Vacatio nostra a malis operibus, vacatio illorum a bonis operibus est. Melius est enim arare quam saltare. Illi ab opere bono vacant; ab opere nugatorio non vacant. Nobis sabbatum indicit Deus, Quale? Primo ubi sit videte. Intus est, in corde est sabbatum nostrum.*

³² De decem chordis (sermo 9.3) (CCSL 49.110): *Dicitur tibi ut spiritualiter observes sabbatum, non quomodo iudaei observant sabbatum carnali otio. Vacare enim volunt ad nugas atque luxurias suas. Melius enim faceret iudaeus in agro suo aliquid utile quam in theatro seditiosus existeret. Et melius feminae eorum die sabbati lanam facerent quam toto die in maenianis suis impudice saltarent.*

These four passages, like our passage of pseudo-Ignatius, are based on the contrast of carnal Judaism with spiritual Christianity. The Jews observe the Sabbath in a servile manner, that is, as slaves to the body. They observe it carnally by abstaining from physical labor, while Christians observe it spiritually by abstaining from sin. In their carnal observance of the Sabbath, Jewish men refrain from plowing, digging, and other agricultural work, and Jewish women refrain from working with wool. And what do the Jews do on the Sabbath? They devote themselves to luxurious pursuits; they eat and drink; the men sit in the theater.³³ And they dance; in the second and third cited passages the men are the ones who are dancing, while in the first and fourth passages the women are the ones who are dancing, and they are said to be dancing “on their balconies.” (Although Augustine accuses the women of dancing “immodestly,” he does not accuse the Jews of mixed dancing or of sexual license.³⁴) In sum, the Jews devote their Sabbath leisure to luxuries, delicacies, and matters of no worth. Thus Augustine.

Dancing and clapping on the Sabbath are prohibited according to Mishnah Beitza 5:2:

כל שחייבין עליו משום שבות ... בשבת חייבין עליו ביום טוב
ואלו הן ... לא עולין באילן ולא רוכבין על גבי בהמה ולא שטין על פני המים
ולא מטפחין ולא מספקין ולא מרקדין

Any act for which people are culpable on the Sabbath because of the requirement of Sabbath rest ... people are culpable on its account also on a festival-day. And what acts are these? People may not climb a tree or ride on an animal or swim on water or clap (hands) or slap (the thighs) or dance.

According to rabbinic Sabbath law, aside from the thirty nine classes of labor that are prohibited on the Sabbath by virtue of the scriptural prohibition not to do any manner of work (Exodus 20:9), a whole range of activities is prohibited by virtue of the scriptural requirement of “resting” on the Sabbath (Exodus 23:12).³⁵ The Mishnah states that the requirement of “resting” applies to festival days no less than the Sabbath. Among the activities that are prohibited because they violate the requirement of resting are clapping (hands), slapping (thighs), and dancing. The Talmudim and later commentators debate the reason for this prohibition and the exact definition of the

³³ The historian Socrates reports that the Jews of Alexandria in 412 C.E. devoted their Sabbath leisure to theatrical amusements: “On the day of the Sabbath the troop of dancers would collect greater crowds than normal because the Jews, idle on that day, devote their attention not to the hearing of the Law but to theatrical amusements. Consequently the day became the cause for disorder among portions of the populace” (History of the Church 7.13 = PG 67:761). This passage is cited by D. Sperber, *Sinai* 61 (5727/1967) 71-73, an addendum to his article “Dancing on the Sabbath,” and by me in “Pagan and Christian Evidence on the Ancient Synagogue,” *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee Levine (New York/ Philadelphia, 1987) 159-181, at 159 = *The Significance of Yavneh* 244.

³⁴ Well observed by Sperber, “Dancing on the Sabbath.”

³⁵ For prohibitions derived from the requirement of “resting” (known as *shevut*), see also M. Shabbat 10:6; Eruvin 10:3, 15; Pesachim 6:2; Rosh Hashanah 4:8.

activities to which the Mishnah refers.³⁶ In any case, according to this Mishnah clapping and dancing, two of the activities in which the Jews of Syria engaged on the Sabbath according to pseudo-Ignatius, are prohibited on the Sabbath.

The Babylonian Talmud, however, reports the following (B. Beitzah 30a):

אמר ליה רבא בר רב חנין לאביי: תנן, אין מטפחין ואין מספקין ואין מרקדין, והאידנא דקא חזינן דעבדן הכי, ולא אמרינן להו ולא מידי... - הנה להם לישראל, מוטב שיהיו שוגגין ואל יהיו מזידין

Rava son of R. Hanin said to Abaye: We have learned (in the Mishnah): People may not clap (the hands) or slap (the thighs) or dance; and yet we see that people do this and we do not say anything to them! He replied to him: ... Let the people of Israel be: better that they should err inadvertently rather than sin presumptuously.

The Mishnah prohibits it, but the Jews of Babylonia dance and clap anyway! Don't we sages have the obligation to tell the dancing Jews that their behavior is against rabbinic law, asks Rava b. R. Hanin. Abbaye replies: they will not listen to us anyway, they will continue to dance and clap. Better that they should sin in ignorance rather than knowingly flout the law.

The testimony of these two fourth-century Babylonian sages shows that even within the rabbinic circles of Babylonia the Mishnaic prohibition of dancing and clapping on festivals³⁷ (and, we may assume, on the Sabbath) was not widely observed. Two conclusions follow. First, dancing and clapping on the Sabbath (or festival) do not ipso facto render their practitioners outside the pale of rabbinic Judaism and rabbinic society, in spite of the fact that the rabbis regarded these activities as forbidden; on the contrary, Abbaye wants to make sure that these Jews are not estranged from rabbinic authority on this account. Second, if Jews danced and clapped on festivals in fourth century Babylonia, as stated by Rava b. R. Hanin and Abbaye, we may well believe that Jews danced and clapped on the Sabbath in fourth century Syria, as stated by pseudo-Ignatius and implied by John Chrysostom, and in fifth century north Africa, as stated by Augustine.

³⁶ See Y. Gilat, *Studies in the Development of the Halakha* (Bar-Ilan, 1992) 88-92; Kister, "Prayers," 217-18 n. 58. "Clapping, slapping, and dancing" are a standard triad in rabbinic texts; see Lieberman, *Tosefta K'Fshuta* vol. 3 Moed 298.

³⁷ The talmudic context implies that the subject is the observance of festivals, not the Sabbath. The Mishnah itself reports that women used to dance in the vineyards on Yom Kippur (M. Taanit 4:8), but that report does not necessarily contradict the prohibition of M. Beitzah 5:2, because the dancing of the women, denoted by the verb חולות, is probably not the same activity as that prohibited by M. Beitzah, denoted by the verb מרקדין. In a very perceptive article Tal Ilan argues that in biblical and rabbinic texts the verb חול denotes women dancing with women, while the verb רקד denotes men dancing with men. See her "Dance and Gender in *Massekhet Taanit*," in *A Feminist Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud: Introduction and Studies*, ed. Tal Ilan et al. (Tübingen, 2007) 217-225.

A key point, however, is hidden from us. In what setting, for what purpose, and animated by what sentiments, did these Jews perform their dancing and clapping? May we assume that the Jews of Syria, Babylonia, and North Africa were all doing the same thing? Augustine says that the women were dancing on the balconies (*maeniana*), structures that protrude from the upper story of a house into the airspace of the public way and as a result are visible from the public way.³⁸ So in effect the women are dancing in public, hence immodestly (*impudice*). But why are the women dancing on balconies? What does this mean? Augustine does not tell us, and I do not know.

Rejoicing in meditation on laws; marveling at the creative work of God

Pseudo-Ignatius says that Christians too, like the Jews, rejoice on the Sabbath, except that Christian rejoicing consists of “meditation on laws” (μελέτη νόμων). On which laws are Christians to meditate? We have three basic possibilities. Theodoret of Cyrrhus (ca. 393-ca. 466), an outstanding exemplar of the Antiochene school of biblical exegesis, explains that Christians accept three kinds of *nomoi*:³⁹

Τῶν θείων νόμων εἶδη τρία παρὰ τοῦ μακαρίου διδασκόμεθα Παύλου. Τὸν μὲν γὰρ δῖχα γραμμάτων ἔφη διὰ τῆς κτίσεως καὶ τῆς φύσεως τοῖς ἀνθρώποις δεδόσθαι... τὸν δὲ διὰ τοῦ μεγάλου Μωσέως ἐν γράμμασι παρεσχῆσθαι... Ὅϊδε δὲ καὶ τρίτον μετὰ τούτους τεθέντα, τὸν τῆς χάριτος
From the blessed Paul we learn that the divine laws are of three kinds: the unwritten law given to human beings in creation and nature ... the law that was provided in writing through the great Moses ... and a third one, laid down after these, the law of grace.

This tri-partite scheme, with numerous variations, is well attested in Christian writings of the third-fifth centuries.⁴⁰ Hence, when a Christian text speaks of divine *nomos/nomoi*, it might be referring to the laws of the natural order created by God, and/or the laws of the Torah given by God to Moses, and/or the law of grace, the new covenant between God and humanity through Christ. To which of these does pseudo-Ignatius refer when he says that Christians are to spend the Sabbath meditating on “laws”? The answer surely⁴¹ is “the unwritten law given to human beings in creation and nature.” The Sabbath is a memorial to God’s creation of the world, and on the Sabbath a Christian is

³⁸ My thanks to Prof. Werner Eck of the University of Cologne who enlightened me on the meaning of *maeniana*. On the gendered aspects of dance, see Ilan’s article cited in n. 37.

³⁹ PG 80.989-992 (commentary on Psalm 18 [19]). Translation based on Robert C. Hill, *Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentary on the Psalms 1-72* (Washington, D.C. 2000) 133.

⁴⁰ *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G.W. H. Lampe (Oxford, 1961) s.v. *nomos*, definition C. This passage of Theodoret is cited under C 2.

⁴¹ Ohne Zweifel = mit Zweifel.

to meditate on God's creative acts. This interpretation is supported by the Apostolic Constitutions.

In a series of passages the Apostolic Constitutions, a work which, as I noted above, shares language and ideas with pseudo-Ignatius, connects "meditation on the laws" with the observance of the Sabbath, and clearly implies that the laws in question are the laws of God made manifest in creation. AC 7.36 is a prayer about Sabbath and Lord's day. Since it is rather lengthy, I adduce here only those sections dealing with the Sabbath, and briefly summarize the omitted material. I have underlined those phrases (in both the Greek and the translation) that particularly resonate with our passage of pseudo-Ignatius:⁴²

1. Κύριε παντοκράτορ, κόσμον ἔκτισας διὰ Χριστοῦ καὶ σάββατον ὥρισας εἰς μνήμην τούτου, ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατέπαυσας ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων εἰς μελέτην τῶν σῶν νόμων, καὶ ἑορτὰς διετάξω εἰς εὐφροσύνην τῶν ἡμετέρων ψυχῶν, ὅπως εἰς μνήμην ἐρχώμεθα τῆς ὑπὸ σοῦ κτισθείσης σοφίας...· 4. Νόμον αὐτοῖς ἔδωρήσω δέκα λογίων σῆ φωνῇ φθεγγθέντα καὶ χειρὶ σῆ καταγραφέντα· σαββατίζειν ἐνετείλω, οὐ πρόφασιν ἀργίας διδούς, ἀλλ' ἀφορμὴν εὐσεβείας, εἰς γνῶσιν τῆς σῆς δυνάμεως, εἰς κώλυσιν κακῶν ὡς ἐν ἱερῷ καθεύξας περιβόλῳ διδασκαλίας χάριν, εἰς ἀγαλλίαμα ἑβδομάδος· διὰ τοῦτο ἑβδομὰς μία καὶ ἑβδομάδες ἑπτὰ καὶ μὴν ἑβδομος καὶ ἐνιαυτὸς ἑβδομος καὶ τούτου κατὰ ἀνακύκλησιν ἔτος πεντηκοστὸν εἰς ἄφεσιν. 5. Ὅπως μηδεμίαν ἔχωσιν πρόφασιν ἄνθρωποι ἄγνοιαν σκήψασθαι, τούτου χάριν πᾶν σάββατον ἐπέτρεψας ἀργεῖν, ὅπως μηδὲ λόγον τις ἐν ὀργῇ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ προέσθαι θελήσῃ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων· σάββατον γὰρ ἐστὶν κατάπαυσις δημιουργίας, τελείωσις κόσμου, νόμων ζήτησις, αἶνος εἰς Θεὸν εὐχάριστος ὑπὲρ ὧν ἀνθρώποις ἔδωρήσατο.

1. O Lord almighty, you have created the world by Christ, and have appointed the Sabbath in memory of this, because on that day you rested from [your] works,⁴³ for meditation on your laws. You have also appointed festivals

⁴² My translation is based on that of *Ante Nicene Fathers* vol. 7.

⁴³ To paraphrase: "O Lord almighty, you have created the world by Christ, and have appointed the Sabbath in memory of this (the creation? Christ? the creation through Christ?), so that we may meditate on your laws, because on that day you rested from your works." This is how the sentence is construed by David Fiensy, *Prayers Alleged to be Jewish* (Scholars Press, 1985) 75; Pieter van der Horst and Judith H. Newman, *Early Jewish Prayers in Greek* (Berlin/New York, 2008) 74 and 76; Willy Rordorf, *Sabbat und Sonntag in der alten Kirche* (Zürich, 1972) p. 99. The ambiguity in the sentence is two-fold. First, is God resting from his works on the Sabbath, or is he causing us, his worshipers, to rest from our works? (In other words, is κατέπαυσας intransitive or transitive?) Second, how should the phrase "for meditation on your laws" be attached to the rest of the sentence? Even if God is the one resting, as I have translated the sentence, surely God is not the one meditating; we humans meditate on the laws and our meditating must depend grammatically on the phrase "in memory of this." In support of the translation I have given is the fact that the compiler of AC, although a respecter of the Sabbath (see note 57 below), opposed idleness on the Sabbath: see AC 2.36:2 ("the Sabbath is for meditation on the laws, not idleness of hands"; see below); 2.60.3 (idleness on the Sabbath characterizes Jews); 2.63.5-6 (work constantly); 6.20.9 (periods of idleness are commanded by the Deuterosis, which of course is not binding on Christians); 6.23.3 (see below). Our passage of pseudo-Ignatius also opposes Sabbath idleness. For whatever it may be worth, I note that canon 29 of the church council of Laodicea in Phrygia (ca. 360) forbids Christians from resting on the Sabbath; see Rordorf, *Sabbat und Sonntag* p.

for the rejoicing of our souls, that we might come into the remembrance of that wisdom which was created by you (Prov. 8:22); [2. the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ; the celebration of the resurrection on the Lord's day; through Christ God has drawn the gentiles to be his chosen people.] [3. The exodus from Egypt.] 4. You gave them the law of the ten sayings, which was pronounced by your voice and written by your hand. You commanded the observance of the Sabbath, affording not an occasion of idleness, but an opportunity of piety, for the knowledge of your power, and the prohibition of evils; you have restrained them as within a sacred enclosure for the sake of teaching for the rejoicing upon the seventh period. On this account there is a week, and seven weeks, and the seventh month, and the seventh year, and in accordance with this cycle the fiftieth year for remission. 5. So that they might have no pretext to pretend ignorance, on account of this you permitted them to rest every Sabbath, so that no one might be willing to send a word out of his mouth in anger on the day of the Sabbath. For the Sabbath is the cessation of creation, the completion of the world, the inquiry of laws, and the grateful praise to God for the blessings he has bestowed upon humanity. [6-7. The Lord's day surpasses the Sabbath.]

In its current form this is a Christian prayer. However, as many scholars have observed, this prayer (and its neighboring ones in AC 7.33-38) seems to be a Christianized version of a Jewish original.⁴⁴ From a tradition-history perspective the prayer may well have begun its life as a Jewish prayer, perhaps in Hebrew, before ending up as a Greek Christian prayer in the Apostolic Constitutions. Perhaps there was a Jewish-Christian (Christian-Jewish?) stage along the way.⁴⁵ What the prayer looked like at every stage and whether a given phrase be Jewish or Christian (or both) are immensely complicated questions that I cannot treat here in any detail.⁴⁶ I assume, as most scholars do, that the compiler of the Apostolic Constitutions rewrote this prayer just as he rewrote all his other sources. My goal is to see how this prayer, in its current Christian form, sheds light on our passage of pseudo-Ignatius, and vice versa. I refer especially to the phrases I have underlined.

Like our passage of pseudo-Ignatius, this prayer contrasts the Sabbath with the Lord's day. The Lord commanded the Sabbath, but the Lord's day is superior to it. The Sabbath is not to be an occasion of idleness but of piety and spiritual pursuit, what

88. AC 8.33.2 might be an exception to this pattern (slaves may rest on Sabbath and Sunday). Hence as a Christian text, the opening line of the prayer should say that God rested, not that God commands us to rest. See note 50 below.

⁴⁴ Full discussion Fiensy, *Prayers Alleged to be Jewish*; van der Horst, *Early Jewish Prayers*; and Kister, "Prayers."

⁴⁵ See G. Rouwhorst, "Jewish Liturgical Traditions in early Syriac Christianity," *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997) 72-93, at 85-87, summarized in Rouwhorst, "The Reception of the Jewish Sabbath in Early Christianity," in *Christian Feast and Festival*, ed. P. Post et al. (Leuven, 2001) 223-266, at 259-260.

⁴⁶ Fiensy, van der Horst, and Kister attempt to reconstruct the Jewish originals of these prayers.

pseudo-Ignatius calls “meditation on laws,” what the prayer in paragraph 1 calls “meditation on your laws” and in paragraph five “inquiry of laws.” The meaning of these phrases in the prayer is established by the parallelism between the first and second sentences. The first sentence is about the Sabbath, the second is about the festivals. “You have also appointed festivals for the rejoicing of our souls, that we might come into the remembrance of that wisdom which was created by you.”⁴⁷ Sabbaths and festivals alike are for rejoicing; on festivals we are to remember Christ (who of course is Wisdom, as the next phrases explain), and on Sabbaths, which were instituted by God “in memory of this” (the creation? Christ? the creation through Christ?), we are to meditate “on your laws”, that is, the laws of creation and providence. This is what is stated in paragraph 4, “You commanded the observance of the Sabbath, affording not an occasion of idleness, but an opportunity of piety, for the knowledge of your power,⁴⁸ and the prohibition of evils.” This is what is stated too in our passage of pseudo-Ignatius, the Sabbath is for “marveling at the creative work of God,” which is another way of saying “meditating on the laws of God.” In the Apostolic Constitutions *nomos/nomoi* regularly means “the law(s) of creation and providence.”⁴⁹

If the phrase “meditation on your laws” was part of this prayer in its initial Jewish phase, perhaps in that context it meant “meditation on the Torah” or “meditation on the laws of the Torah” or simply “study of the Torah.”⁵⁰ The Greek root *μελετ-* is used by the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew root *למד* as, for example in Joshua 1:8, *καὶ οὐκ ἀποστήσεται ἡ βίβλος τοῦ νόμου τούτου ἐκ τοῦ στόματός σου, καὶ μελετήσεις ἐν αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός*, “this book of the law⁵¹ shall not depart from your mouth, and you shall meditate on it day and night.” Rabbinic readers understood this verse as referring to the study of the

⁴⁷ In *Praeparatio Evangelica* 7.6 304D Eusebius says that Moses gave the Sabbath to the Jews “as a reminder for dedication to the holy words” (εἰς ὑπόμνησιν σχολῆς τῶν ἱερῶν λόγων).

⁴⁸ Cf. [Athanasius] *De sabbatis et circumcisione* PG 28.136, Οὐκοῦν οὐκ ἀργίαν σημαίνει τὸ Σάββατον, ἀλλὰ γνῶσιν μὲν τοῦ Ποιητοῦ...

⁴⁹ AC 2.61.4; 7.35.10; 7.38.5; 8.16.3. Is this meaning of *nomos/i* to be connected with AC’s concept of “natural law” (*ho physikos nomos*)? See AC 1.6; 6.12.13; 6.19.2; 6.20.1, 4, 10; 6.22.5; 6.23.1; 6.25; 6.30.1; 7.33.3; 8.12.25, 30. I have not seen Eva M. Synek, “*Dieses Gesetz ist gut, heilig, es zwingt nicht ...*” *Zum Gesetzesbegriff der Apostolischen Konstitutionen* (Vienna, 1997), which is cited by van der Horst. I do not see any difference between “meditation on laws” (in our passage of pseudo-Ignatius) and “meditation on the laws” (in AC).

⁵⁰ And when it was a Jewish text perhaps the opening sentence meant (omitting the obvious Christian interpolation “by Christ”) “O Lord almighty, you created the world and appointed the Sabbath in memory of this (the creation); on that day you caused us to rest from our works so that we may study the Torah.” This is how Metzger (vol. 3 p. 83) understands it (“Seigneur, tout-puissant, ... tu as créé le monde and pour en faire mémoire tu as institué le sabbat, car tu as établi qu’en ce jour on se repose de son travail pour méditer tes lois”). As a Jewish text, the prayer may well have said that God commanded us his worshipers to rest on the Sabbath. See note 43 above.

⁵¹ In the LXX “the book of this law.”

Torah book and all that was derived from it.⁵² So if the phrase *meletê nomôn* entered this prayer in its Jewish phase, it may well have meant “study of the Torah.” However the linguistic parallel between pseudo-Ignatius and Apostolic Constitutions suggests strongly that the phrase “meditation on the laws” entered this prayer only in its latest stage, at the hands of the compiler of the Apostolic Constitutions;⁵³ that it therefore means “meditation on the laws of creation,” that is, “meditation on the creative works of God” or “meditation on divine providence”; that such meditation might include, of course, the study of scripture, but should not be understood as referring specifically to the Torah or the laws of the Torah. In fact, the phrase “meditation on the laws” is not attested in any Graeco-Jewish text. The phrase is Christian.⁵⁴

The connection between meditation on laws and the Christian observance of the Sabbath is clear too in Apostolic Constitutions 2.36.2. There is no Jewish substrate here; the passage appears to have been composed by the compiler of the Apostolic Constitutions. The text is a Christian version of the Decalogue; the Sabbath commandment runs as follows:

Γίνωσκε δημιουργίαν Θεοῦ διάφορον, ἀρχὴν λαβοῦσαν διὰ Χριστοῦ· καὶ σαββατιεῖς διὰ τὸν παυσάμενον μὲν τοῦ ποιεῖν, οὐ παυσάμενον δὲ τοῦ προνοεῖν,

⁵² E.g. B. Avodah Zarah 19b, Menahot 99b. In AC 1.4 the “book of the Torah” in this verse becomes “the sayings of Christ”: τὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγια ἀναμνησκόμενος διηλεκτῶς μελέτα. Λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή σοι, ὅτι· “Ἐν τῷ Νόμῳ αὐτοῦ μελετήσεις ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός, περιπατῶν ἐν ἀγρῷ καὶ ἐν οἴκῳ καθήμενος, καὶ κοιταζόμενος καὶ διανιστάμενος, ἵνα συνιῇς ἐν πᾶσιν. “And keeping in mind the sayings of Christ, meditate on them continually. For so the Scripture says to you, ‘You shall meditate in his law day and night (Joshua 1:8), when walking in the field and sitting in house, when lying down, and rising up (Deuteronomy 6:7), so that you may have understanding in all things (Deuteronomy 29:8).”

⁵³ On the implications of linguistic parallels between pseudo-Ignatius and AC, see Fiensy, *Prayers* 26 (“if there are strong resemblances in language and thought to pseudo-Ignatius in any of the phrases of alleged Jewish prayers, it should cause us to doubt that at least that particular phrase has come from the pen of a Jew, especially if the phrase appears elsewhere in AC”), 166, and 181.

⁵⁴ The earliest Christian attestation seems to be Eusebius (ca. 264-ca. 340), commentary on Psalm 91 (92) PG 23.1168-69 Ἐνθεν εἰκότως καὶ ὁ Μωϋσέως νόμος ... ἡμέραν τινὰ τοῖς πλήθεσιν ἀφώρισε, ὅπως κἂν ταύτη ἀπέχωνται μὲν τῶν συνήθων ἔργων, σχολάζοιεν δὲ τῇ τοῦ θείου νόμου μελέτῃ. “Thus it was with good reason that the law of Moses ... set aside a certain day for the multitudes so that on it they could both distance themselves from their customary labors and have leisure for the meditation on the divine law.” The overall argument of Eusebius’ exposition strongly suggests that this phrase means not “study of the Torah” but “meditation on the works of God.” Cf. the Eusebian text cited in note 47 above. *Meletê nomou/nomôn* is not a standard locution in Graeco-Jewish texts. The closest approximations that I have found are Philo, *De specialibus legibus* 4.169 (regarding the king) ἐμμελετῶντος ἀεὶ τοῖς νόμοις, and especially Josephus AJ 16.43 τὴν τε ἐβδόμην τῶν ἡμερῶν ἀνιέμεν τῇ μαθήσει τῶν ἡμετέρων ἐθνῶν καὶ νόμου, μελέτην ὥσπερ ἄλλου τινὸς καὶ τούτων ἀξιοῦντες εἶναι δι’ ὧν οὐχ ἁμαρτησόμεθα. It is possible that the phrase began as a Jewish locution, but all the extant examples are Christian, and have a Christian meaning. Various scholars have assumed that the phrase is evidence of Jewish authorship; see Wilhelm Bousset, “Eine jüdische Gebetssammlung,” in his *Religionsgeschichtliche Studien*, ed. Anthonie Verheule (Leiden, 1979) 238-241 (originally published in 1915); Moshe Weinfeld, *Early Jewish Liturgy* (Jerusalem, 2004) 187 [Hebrew]; Kister, “Prayers,” 218. I disagree; so does van der Horst, *Early Jewish Prayers* 76.

σαββατισμὸν μελέτης νόμων, οὐ χειρῶν ἀργίαν. Πᾶσαν ἔκνομον ἐπιθυμίαν ἄπωσαι, πᾶσαν λύμην τὴν ἐπὶ διαφθορᾷ ἀνθρώπων, πᾶσαν ὀργήν.

Know the varied creation of God, which took its beginning through Christ, and you shall observe the Sabbath, on account of the one who ceased doing, but did not cease exercising providence. The Sabbath is for meditation on laws, not idleness of hands. Set aside every unlawful lust, everything injurious that causes destruction to people, and all anger.

Here are many of the same themes that we saw in 7.36: creation through Christ; observance of the Sabbath because of the creation through Christ; the Sabbath is for “meditation on laws,” not idleness; the Sabbath is for piety. Surely “meditation of laws” means, as above, spiritual contemplation, the contemplation of God’s creation and providence.

Yet another passage in the Apostolic Constitutions links the Sabbath to meditation on laws. AC 6.23.3 (like AC 2.36) was composed outright by the compiler of the Apostolic Constitutions. Inspired by the Sermon on the Mount, the author argues that Jesus fulfills the law by intensifying it or transforming it. Among the given examples is this one:

He who had legislated the observance of the Sabbath through idleness for the sake of meditation on the laws, has now commanded us to give thanks to God every day, by considering the law of creation and of providence.

ὁ σαββατίζειν δι’ ἀργίας νομοθετήσας διὰ τὴν τῶν νόμων μελέτην νῦν καθ’ ἡμέραν ἐκέλευσεν ἡμᾶς, ἀναλογιζομένους δημιουργίας καὶ προνοίας νόμον, εὐχαριστεῖν τῷ Θεῷ.

The text clearly draws a contrast between the old demand of God for Sabbath observance through idleness and meditation, and the new demand for thanking God daily through considering the law of creation and providence. Exactly how to understand the relationship of the old to the new is not clear. Should “meditation on the laws” be understood as the Jewish study of the Torah, in contrast with the Christian cogitation on creation and providence? Perhaps, but not necessarily. If, as I am arguing, “meditation on the laws” is a Christian, not a Jewish, phrase, it should be understood as synonymous with “considering the law of creation and providence.” According to this reading of the text, what has changed in the divine dispensation is frequency: in former times spiritual contemplation was demanded only on the Sabbath (in connection with idleness) but now in Christian time God demands spiritual contemplation (“meditation on laws”) daily, and idleness not at all.⁵⁵

Apostolic Constitutions 6.23 contrasts the weekly Jewish observance of the Sabbath with the daily Christian observance of the Sabbath. In other words, the Christian Sabbath, on which Christians are to contemplate God’s creative acts and

⁵⁵ See note 43 above for AC’s opposition to idleness on the Sabbath.

abstain from sin, is to be observed every day, the entire Christian life. This argument, that the Christian Sabbath is seven days a week while the Jewish Sabbath is but one, goes back at least as far as Justin Martyr in the second century CE and is widely attested in Christian texts after that.⁵⁶ Hence a difficult problem. Should our passage of pseudo-Ignatius be interpreted similarly? When pseudo-Ignatius says “But let each of you observe the Sabbath spiritually, by rejoicing in meditation on laws ...by marveling at the creative work of God,” this would seem to be a classic Christian endorsement of the “spiritual Sabbath” which appears in AC 6.23. Should not a Christian marvel at the creative work of God and the laws of divine providence every day? The Christian Sabbath is the entire Christian life. But pseudo-Ignatius continues, “... And after observing the Sabbath [in this spiritual manner], let every Christ-lover celebrate the Lord’s day.” This seems to suggest that the Christian first observes the Sabbath on Saturday and then celebrates the Lord’s day on Sunday. Other passages in pseudo-Ignatius and the Apostolic Constitutions assume that Christians are to observe the weekly Sabbath (Saturday) as a preparation for the observance of the Lord’s day (Sunday); in other words, Christians are to observe both Saturday and Sunday.⁵⁷ So what does pseudo-Ignatius mean? Willy Rordorf, who has intensely studied the place of the Sabbath in Christian tradition, argues that all four of these passages (our passage of pseudo-Ignatius as well as Apostolic Constitutions 2.36, 6.23, and 7.36) endorse a daily “spiritual Sabbath” as a replacement of the weekly Sabbath (Saturday).⁵⁸ I believe that Rordorf has correctly interpreted AC 6.23, but I am not sure of the intent of our passage of pseudo-Ignatius, AC 2.36 and 7.36. I leave the question open.

In sum: according to our passage of pseudo-Ignatius and these three passages of the Apostolic Constitutions, the Sabbath demanded by God is marked not by physical idleness but by spiritual contemplation, which is summed up in the phrase μελέτη νόμων, “meditation on (the) laws.” The “laws” in question are the laws of creation, the laws of God’s providence. We may assume that the phrase has this meaning also in its sole other occurrence in the work of pseudo-Ignatius (Philadelphians 4):⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 12.3; see the passages collected by Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest* (Philadelphia, 1968) 103-105, citing H. Dumaine (note 8 above).

⁵⁷ AC 2.59.3; 5.20.19; 7.23.2-3; 8.33.1; 8.47.64; pseudo-Ignatius *Philippians* 13; see Rordorf, *Sabbat und Sonntag* pp. 100-103. These texts speak of a special liturgy to be celebrated on the Sabbath; the obligation to “rejoice” on the Sabbath; and/or the prohibition of fasting on it (except for the Sabbath before Easter). (In many western churches Saturday was a fast day, but not in the world of the AC; see Funk’s note on AC 5.20.19.) See esp. AC 7.23.2 Τὸ σάββατον μέντοι καὶ τὴν κυριακὴν ἑορτάζετε, ὅτι τὸ μὲν δημιουργίας ἐστὶν ὑπόμνημα, τὸ δὲ ἀναστάσεως. Additional references in C.W. Dugmore, *The Influence of the Synagogue upon the Divine Office* (Oxford, 1944, repr. 1964) 32-37; Rordorf, *Sunday* 145-153.

⁵⁸ Rordorf, *Sabbat und Sonntag* 97 n. 4.

⁵⁹ Ed. Lightfoot p. 208.

αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ὑποτάγητε ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ· αἱ παρθένοι τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ, οὐ βδελυσσόμεναι γάμον, ἀλλὰ τοῦ κρείσσονος ἐφιέμεναι, οὐκ ἐπὶ διαβολῇ συναφείας, ἀλλ' ἕνεκα τῆς τῶν νόμων μελέτης. Wives, in the fear of God be subservient to your husbands; virgins, in incorruption be subservient to Christ, not abominating marriage, but desiring that which is better, not for the reproach of wedlock, but for the sake of meditation on the laws.

As Lightfoot notes, in this passage “the laws” are not the commandments of the Torah; pseudo-Ignatius is not asking virgins to study the Torah. Surely “the laws” here are the laws of God that are manifest in creation and providence. In other words, pseudo-Ignatius is asking virgins to engage in spiritual contemplation, just as in our passage he is asking all Christians to spend the Sabbath in spiritual contemplation.

Conclusions

This paper is an elucidation of a rich but cryptic text: pseudo-Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* 9, written in Syria in the second half of the fourth century. This text claims that the Jews observe the Sabbath by abstaining from work, abstaining from cooking, abstaining from long journeys, rejoicing in dancing and clapping. If we set aside pseudo-Ignatius’ negative assessment of these Jewish practices, the basic content of his report seems correct. Numerous other sources, both classical and Christian, confirm that the Jews rejoice on the Sabbath, abstain from labor, abstain from cooking, and abstain from journeying. Rabbinic texts also confirm that the Sabbath was to be a day of eating and drinking, and of luxuriant repose. The only surprising item on the list is the last, rejoicing through dancing and clapping. We do not have enough information to know exactly what this means but the same claim appears also in Augustine (explicitly) and John Chrysostom (implicitly). The Babylonian Talmud makes a similar statement with reference to festival observance; the rabbis did not approve of the practice but were powerless to stop Jews of Babylonia from dancing and clapping on festivals, and if Babylonian Jews danced and clapped on festivals, the claim of pseudo-Ignatius, that the Jews of Syria of the same period danced and clapped on the Sabbath, seems entirely plausible.

We cannot determine whether the Jews known to pseudo-Ignatius were “rabbinic” or not.⁶⁰ Observance of the Sabbath, that is, abstention from all kinds of “work” on the Sabbath, was part of the “common Judaism” of Roman and Byzantine antiquity. This does not mean, of course, that each and every Jew observed the Sabbath.

⁶⁰ On the relationship between the Jews of the Roman diaspora and the sages of the land of Israel, see now Doron Mendels and Arye Edrei, *Zweierlei Diaspora* (Göttingen, 2010) and Yehuda Kurtzer, “What Shall the Alexandrians Do?” Rabbinic Judaism and the Mediterranean Diaspora” (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2009).

Surely ancient Jewry had its share of lackadaisical, ambivalent, inattentive, deviant, and rebellious citizens to complement those who were pious. “Common Judaism” refers to social expectations, communal norms, and general patterns of behavior, and those expectations, norms, and patterns included the Sabbath abstentions mentioned by pseudo-Ignatius. So, the fact that rabbinic Sabbath law also prohibits all kinds of labor, including cooking and traveling, hardly proves that the Jews known to pseudo-Ignatius in fourth-century Syria were part of rabbinic society or beholden to rabbinic authority.

The celebration of the Sabbath through dancing and clapping is an intriguing detail. On the one hand, dancing and clapping are prohibited on the Sabbath according to the Mishnah. On the other hand, the Babylonian Talmud acknowledges that Jews did dance and clap, but affirms that such behavior did not render their practitioners outside the pale of rabbinic society.⁶¹ So dancing and clapping cannot be regarded as either rabbinic or non-rabbinic modes of observance of the Sabbath; perhaps they were part of “common Judaism,” we cannot be sure.

In contrast with these Jewish observances, says pseudo-Ignatius, the Christian observance of the Sabbath is to be “spiritual,” consisting of rejoicing in “meditation on laws.” This sounds like a Jewish phrase but it is not, or at least is not demonstrably so; it is a Christian phrase and means “meditation on the laws of creation and providence,” in other words, “marveling at the creative work of God.” It is not clear whether pseudo-Ignatius is endorsing a Christian observance of the Sabbath (Saturday), or whether he believes that Christians should engage in spiritual contemplation daily, so that the Christian Sabbath is actually the entire Christian life. Both of these possibilities receive support in various passages of the Apostolic Constitutions, a work closely related to pseudo-Ignatius, and I leave the question open.

Appendix

Shabbat and Sunday as Queens

At the end of our passage pseudo-Ignatius writes “Let every Christ-lover celebrate the Lord’s day, the day of the resurrection, the queen, the chief of all days.” In his notes ad loc. Lightfoot compares this expression with the rabbinic conception of the Sabbath as a “queen.” However, closer inspection reveals that the parallel is not a parallel.

⁶¹ Even today many otherwise law-observant Jews clap hands when singing *zemirot* on Shabbat, and dance in synagogue on *Simhat Torah*, but these actions, which would seem to contravene the Mishnah, do not put their practitioners outside the pale of Orthodox Jewish society. The halakhic tradition has long been divided over the observance of these Mishnaic prohibitions; see B. Beitzah 30a Tosafot s.v. *tenan*; *Shulhan Arukh Orach Hayyim* 339:3; R. Moshe Feinstein, *Igrot Moshe* 2:100; R. Ovadiah Yosef, *Yehaveh Da’at* 2:58.

B. Shabbat 119a reports the following:

רבי חנינא מיעטף וקאי אפניא דמעלי שבתא,
אמר: בואו ונצא לקראת שבת המלכה.

רבי ינאי לביש מאניה מעלי שבת, ואמר: בואי כלה בואי כלה

R. Hanina robed himself and stood at sunset of the eve of the Sabbath
[and] exclaimed, Come and let us go forth to greet the Sabbath queen.

R. Yannai donned his robes on the eve of the Sabbath and exclaimed,
Come, O bride, Come, O bride!

In this brief but evocative passage R. Hanina and R. Yannai are said to greet the personified Sabbath on Friday evening. For R. Hanina the Sabbath is a queen, for R. Yannai a bride.⁶² This is all the information we have on this subject, and over a millenium will have to pass before the bride-queen metaphor is developed into a mystic theology of the Sabbath, especially among the pietists of sixteenth century Safed.⁶³ In any event R. Hanina's personification of the Sabbath as a queen would seem to have little to do with pseudo-Ignatius' reference to the Lord's day as "the queen, the chief of all days." Pseudo-Ignatius is following standard Greek usage for the "first or most distinguished of any class."⁶⁴ Thus Ephraem the Syrian (d. 373) refers to the Christian Pascha as "the mistress and queen of festivals."⁶⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 326-ca. 390) calls the Pascha "the queen day of days."⁶⁶

⁶² Or both a queen and a bride, in the version of B. Bava Qamma 32b. On this passage see Gilat, *Studies in the Development of the Halakha* 326-327, and Reuven Kimelman, *Mystical Meaning of Lekhah Dodi and Kabbalat Shabbat* (Jerusalem, 2003) 2-4 (Heb.).

⁶³ Elliot Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah* (Albany, 1989); Kimelman, *Mystical Meaning*.

⁶⁴ For this usage see LSJ s.v. *basileus* definition IV 2, "first or most distinguished of any class." *Hêmera* ("day") is feminine, hence *basilis* ("queen").

⁶⁵ Ephraem Syrus, *Sermo in pretiosam et vivificam crucem* 129 (in TLG database work number 4138.053) Αὔτη κυρία καὶ βασίλισσα τῶν ἑορτῶν. Same usage in idem, *De virtutibus et passionibus* (TLG 4138.106) 406 line 9.

⁶⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Funebris oratio in patrem* PG 35.1017 ἡ βασίλισσα τῶν ἡμερῶν ἡμέρα; cf. *In novam Dominicam* PG 36.617.